

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. PAVEL KNYAZEV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1063rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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**On the situation in Ukraine and the need to implement the  
Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

We note the discussions that took place on Tuesday in Minsk in the Trilateral Contact Group and its working subgroups. First and foremost, we welcome the agreement in principle reached within the Contact Group regarding the withdrawal by the Ukrainian armed forces and the insurgents of their tanks, mortars and artillery under 100 mm in calibre from the line of contact. However, this is only one step, albeit an important one. Unfortunately, significant progress has not been achieved on other issues.

There are still many obstacles standing in the way of a peaceful and sustainable settlement of the situation in Ukraine. The main obstacle is Kyiv's unwillingness to implement clearly and fully what was endorsed by its signing of the Minsk Package of Measures.

Instead of providing Donbas with all the guarantees envisaged in Minsk for ensuring the rights of its inhabitants, new interpretations and circumventions are being sought.

Making amendments to the Constitution that have not been discussed with anyone, refusing to enact the law on special status in its initial form and adopting rules of its own on the holding of elections does nothing to accommodate the other side and just gives the appearance of implementing commitments. The proposals made by Donetsk and Luhansk have yet to be examined. Kyiv is doing everything to avoid dialogue with them in the Contact Group. Unfortunately, this was demonstrated once again this Tuesday.

If Kyiv does not wish to derail the implementation of Points 4 and 12 of the Minsk Package of Measures on local elections, it needs to engage urgently in substantive dialogue with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk in the Contact Group and its working subgroup on political issues, including on the parameters for a separate Ukrainian law on elections in Donbas and on the date for holding these elections.

We have been compelled time and again to reiterate that establishing real and direct dialogue by Kyiv with Donetsk and Luhansk is the key to a peaceful settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis. All the questions that should be agreed upon with the representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk under Minsk II must in fact be agreed upon with these representatives. This concerns electoral legislation, constitutional reform and the forthcoming elections.

We also link the continuing shelling by Ukrainian security forces of Donetsk, Horlivka and other towns in Donbas to the unwillingness to implement the Minsk agreements in practice. We see no military purpose in the shelling of residential districts, which is carried out blindly over large areas using tanks and other means. We do on the other hand see the results. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) reported the shelling of Donetsk on 19 July, as a result of which one civilian was killed and buildings were damaged, including hospital No. 23. We note that it was the SMM monitors and not the media who established that the firing came from security force positions in the village of Pisky. On Monday, on the eve of the latest Contact Group meeting, things were quiet along virtually the entire length of the line of contact. This could only be welcomed. Unfortunately, however, this lull was once again followed by a resumption of the shelling of towns in Donbas, in particular a house on Kuibysheva Street in Donetsk, as reported by the OSCE Mission's monitors. Everyone understands that as long as tension remains on the line of contact there is a pretext for sabotaging the political process.

We see no progress in the implementation of Point 5 of the Package of Measures on ensuring pardon and amnesty by enacting the law prohibiting the prosecution and punishment of persons in connection with the events that took place in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Kyiv is hampering efforts to set up mobile banking services, while Donetsk and Luhansk support the initiative. There is a dire shortage of national currency in the region. If the situation continues, the hryvnia will be replaced by the United States dollar, the euro and the Russian rouble. This is another step towards alienating these two areas from the rest of Ukraine.

The social and economic blockade of the region continues to grow worse. People are forced to queue day and night at checkpoints as Ukraine has dramatically reduced their number. The most vulnerable population groups are suffering once again because deliveries of commercial goods, including food and medicines, are blocked.

Another serious problem is the lack of political will on the part of the leadership in Kyiv to ensure complete and effective control over all security structures and formations, which should be under the command of the central authorities. I am referring primarily to the various extremist neo-fascist groups like Right Sector, Azov, Aidar or Tornado. The events in Mukacheve conclusively prove that the lawless essence of these illegal armed formations has remained unchanged since their time on Maidan. If we believe the SMM's reports, the armed incident in Mukacheve is to be regarded as thuggery and terrorism. On the other hand, Right Sector's refusal to follow orders from the Ukrainian command in Avdiivka, as reported by the SMM, for some reason failed to elicit any response from the Kyiv authorities.

The situation in Shyrokyne is clear evidence of Kyiv's inability or unwillingness to control its security forces. This test of the willingness to engage in de-escalation has still not been passed. The insurgents unilaterally abandoned their positions in this village in an effort

to make it easier to finalize an agreement on its demilitarization. On paper Kyiv is also in favour of demilitarization, but in practice the security forces remain in their positions on the western outskirts of Shyrokyne and have no intention of leaving. I might add that they are not returning one of the nearby observation posts to the SMM.

The Donbas insurgents unilaterally withdrew their tanks and some types of artillery weapons under 100 mm in calibre to three kilometres from the line of contact prior to an agreement being reached in the Contact Group. We firmly believe that if the insurgents had not taken this step pretexts would long have been found for Kyiv not to agree to anything. Now it is essential to ensure the rapid and full implementation of the agreement reached. We trust that it will in practice become a step towards the de-escalation of tension and violence. In that context, we expect that the SMM will not limit itself to recording the movement of equipment by both sides but will also provide intensive patrolling in the security zone itself and will be able to verify that the weapons to be withdrawn have in fact been removed from the security zone.

We still believe that ensuring the SMM monitors' safety and unimpeded access is a matter of priority.

We are convinced that the Ukrainian law enforcement authorities and armed forces must quickly eliminate all the extremist groups and gangs which are exacerbating the situation and calling for the abolition of the Minsk agreements, and we hope they are able to do so. These groups are responsible for many crimes – both war crimes and crimes of an ordinary nature. We urge our colleagues across the ocean, who, as recent events have confirmed, have considerable influence on Kyiv, to see to it that the Ukrainian authorities give the appropriate orders.

In conclusion, we should like to stress that there is no alternative to the Minsk agreements. They are not ideal, they do not correspond fully to the requests of both sides by any means, but there is no other option for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Donbas insurgents, despite strong internal resistance and huge sacrifices, have agreed on the need to implement the Minsk agreements, are taking practical steps to that end and are ready for dialogue. We expect that Kyiv is also aware that it is in its own best interests to do the same. Let us repeat: the road to peace in Ukraine is possible only through real direct dialogue with its own citizens, including and primarily with those who represent certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of the country.

Thank you for your attention.